

PRAYING FOR MRS. OGILVIE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to mention very briefly that we are all very concerned about the Chaplain's wife. As some know, she has been extremely ill for a long time, and it is my understanding she took a turn for the worse in recent days. The Chaplain is with her. They moved her to another facility in another part of the country; she is very sick.

The Chaplain prays for us, prays for our families and friends and anyone we make known to him about whom he should be praying about. He is a very fine man. He is very concerned about the welfare of the Senate, and I hope the Senate would be concerned about his welfare and that of his wife, and that we mention Mrs. Ogilvie in our prayers.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
CONFERENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there are a number of issues I want to speak about briefly this morning. First of all, there is a conference report that has not yet been completed—there are many, but I will talk about the defense authorization conference today. There is one issue holding that up.

I have had the good fortune of having the acting chairman of the House Armed Services Committee come and speak to me on this issue. There is an amendment I offered with a number of other Senators that would allow our veterans who are disabled and who have retirement benefits from the U.S. military to draw both of their benefits. Right now, they cannot; they have to make a choice. I have explained this to people at home, and they are dumbfounded that people who have been declared to have a disability in the military, and following the declaration and retirement, they cannot draw both pensions. That is holding up a \$400 billion conference because the President of the United States—I used to say people around him, but that is clearly gone now; the President makes the decision—has said he will veto the \$400 billion bill. He is going to veto it because of veterans who are disabled and drawing unemployment. He has said it would be something that is not good for the country. I don't think that is true.

I will talk about that more throughout the day. I see my friend from Minnesota. The conference is not closed. I dare the President to veto the bill. The conference should get that report out here. We should pass it and send it to

the President and let him veto that. There isn't a veteran in the United States who would not be dumbfounded that the Commander in Chief would veto a bill that gives benefits to somebody who is disabled and retired from the military. It is unfair, inequitable, and wrong. I dare the President to veto that. If there were ever an opportunity to override a veto, this is it. I think the President would make a mistake doing this.

The second thing I want to talk about is, I wrote a letter to Mitch Daniels. I said—generalizing—reading all the press accounts, the President is campaigning more than he is working on policy for this country. He is trying to show the trips he takes, where he makes campaign stops, are really trips where he is doing something of a policy nature, so that trip will be paid for by the taxpayers. I have asked Mitch Daniels, how do you justify that? No response.

Well, I think we have to do something to make the taxpayers free of the obligation of paying for campaign expenses. When we campaign, we have to pay those expenses out of our campaign funds. The President should do that. The Republican National Committee should pay for those trips, and taxpayers should not. I will have more to say about that later in the day.

I see my friend from Minnesota. His plane was a little late, and this is his assigned time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
S. 3009

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Senator from Nevada.

Mr. President, I come to the floor for now the sixth time with a piece of legislation I have introduced. At other times, Senator KENNEDY has spoken about this, Senator CLINTON has spoken about this, and Senator DURBIN has spoken about this. Many have. I come to the floor to ask that the Senate proceed—I will not make the unanimous consent request yet; I don't see colleagues from the other side of the aisle here yet—that we pass calendar No. 619, S. 3009. This is a bill to extend unemployment benefits for an additional 13 weeks for workers in every State, plus 7 weeks in additional benefits for workers in States with the highest levels of unemployment. This extends the expiration date of the temporary benefits program we passed last March, which otherwise would terminate December 31.

Every time we have tried to do this, my colleagues on the other side—usually it has been the Senator from Oklahoma—have come out and objected. What I have heard my Republican colleagues on the other side of the aisle say is that they need more time to look at this. It is seven pages long. We have been at this now for well over, I

think, 2 weeks and, really, one page a day certainly can be read.

I have also heard from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that they want to work with us. We have been trying to sit down with staff on the other side because we believe we should not leave until we get this done.

One of the points my colleague from Oklahoma has been making is that we are talking about 26 weeks; in other words, if we take what we did in March—people then had 13 weeks of benefits—and they now get an additional 13 weeks of benefits, that is 26 weeks.

I say to my colleague from Oklahoma and other Republicans that we have about 900,000 men and women who have run out of unemployment benefits in the country—20,000 in Minnesota; 50,000 in Minnesota in February; close to 2 million in February of next year—and extending 13 weeks of benefits for people who have utilized the 13 weeks we gave them earlier is exactly what we did in the early 1990s on a 97-to-3 vote, with my colleague from Oklahoma, among others, supporting it.

I do not understand what the problem is. Having been back home and traveled the State a lot, I am not going to make an argument that I would consider to be a false dichotomy; that is to say, people are just focused on the economy and nothing else. I say people are worried about a lot of issues. They are worried about Iraq and what is the right thing to do, they are worried about terrorism, and they are worried about the economy. People want us to focus on the economy, and they want us to put people first. They want us to focus on people, and there are a lot of actions we could take. We could raise the minimum wage. We could invest in education and job training because a lot of workers are trying to go from one job to another, and they need to have that opportunity.

At the very minimum, could we not at least have enough of a sense of compassion and extend unemployment benefits to people who are out of work, through no fault of their own, and have run out of these benefits? This is the sixth time I have asked consent to move forward and pass this legislation.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I will be pleased to yield for a question.

Mr. REID. Has the Senator found at home what I found at home this past Monday? I had a group of veterans with whom I met at 8 o'clock in the morning in Henderson, NV. For the first time I can remember, an elderly World War II veteran came up to me and said: Would you speak to my grandson? His grandson was a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, had a grade point average of 3.7, and could not find a job. At that meeting, I had two young men come up to me, both of whom are college graduates and could not find jobs.

Has the Senator found that not only those people seeking entry-level jobs